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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: RUSSIA WANTS TO COOPERATE WITH MONTENEGRIN MILITARY

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY

**11.** (U) Russian Ambassador Jakov Gerasimov paid a courtesy call on Defense Minister Vucinic on May 18. According to press reports, the Ambassador proposed an agreement on technical cooperation and military education and indicated plans to assign a defense attache to the Russian Embassy in Podgorica soon.

**12.** (SBU) Emboff spoke with the Deputy Defense Minister who was very uncomfortable when inquiry was made as to the type of assistance that might be forthcoming. He fell back on the standard line that Montenegro seeks good relations with all countries and wanted to create space for cooperation and goodwill with all. He alluded to a Russian-Slovène agreement as an example for Montenegro and said that no firm decision had been taken, but he thought that perhaps a Montenegrin officer would be sent to a Russian Military academy.

**13.** (U) Comment: Press coverage of the office call was delayed by Montenegrin holidays, but the timing is significant as the key figures in the Government of Montenegro, smarting from the uproar over the signing of SOFA and exchange of notes on Article 98, seek to find ways to portray themselves publicly as charting an independent course. While the opposition continues to charge that Government decisions will complicate the path to the EU, government has made the point, albeit slowly, that agreements with the U.S. are essential in preparing for NATO admission. A VOA interview with DAS DiCarlo underscoring U.S. support for Montenegro's integration into European institutions has received wide press play and been very helpful.

BARNES